



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Issue 120 – August 7, 2006

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

Last week, I attended an outstanding summer board meeting for the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) in Monterey, California. Jay Rasulo, National Chair, and Roger Dow, President & CEO, reported on progress made on the top 2006 priorities for the organization: Unify the Industry, Increase Relevance and Viability, Increase Public Policy, Expand Marketing Programs, Diversify Revenue Streams and Build Travel Brand USA. The information presented reinforced what we already know: the travel and tourism industry in America is reaching new heights and so is TIA as an organization. Membership is at an all-time high in 2006, and this dynamic duo and the ever-increasing talent that they are bringing into the organization are taking TIA to new levels. New and enhanced programs are continually developed to meet the diverse needs of this growing organization, and in September, during the Inaugural Travel Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C., a major initiative will be announced that will help policymakers and opinion leaders better understand and appreciate travel and tourism's diplomatic and economic potential. AOT will provide information as updates become available. For more information on what TIA is doing and how you can become a member and participate in these valuable programs, I encourage you to visit www.tia.org.

Have a great week.

Margie R. Emmert

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

Rural Tourism Development Grant Program Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2007

The Rural Tourism Development Grant Program (RTDGP) guidelines for fiscal year 2007 are now available. The primary objective of the competitive grant program is to provide coordinated funding for tourism related infrastructure projects. The funding amount for FY 07 is \$697,000. AOT has added \$197,000 of unallocated TEAM grant funds. These funds assist rural economic development through tourism to strengthen the regional and local economies and expand tourism in rural and Tribal communities throughout Arizona. The primary function of the infrastructure project must be tourism development and the project must be designed to initiate economic growth and enhance future tourism development. Applications are available on AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov under the Grants section. Applications must be postmarked and/or hand-delivered to the Arizona Office of Tourism no later than 3 p.m. Friday, August, 18, 2006.

Industry News

Scottsdale, Sedona Team Up to Enhance Visitors' Experiences

The Scottsdale Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Sedona Chamber of Commerce have teamed up to better serve customers and further cross promote the destinations. Through this partnership, Scottsdale and Sedona hope to increase visitation between the two destinations, lengthen visitor stays by educating customers as to the day-trip and overnight opportunities available, and enhance customers' overall experiences by incorporating the other destination so that their collective customers are more likely to return to Arizona and their communities. Scottsdale and Sedona are two of Arizona's most highly visited destinations by affluent visitors. Research shows that Scottsdale visitors enjoy day trips to Sedona and vice versa. According to the July 2005 City of Scottsdale Visitor Inquiry Study, 15 percent of Scottsdale visitors also visited Sedona. A similar study conducted for Sedona (December 2005 Sedona Visitors Study) reveals that 37 percent of Sedona visitors also visited Maricopa County. Per the agreement, Scottsdale and Sedona will market the new visitor opportunities in the following ways:

- A Scottsdale-Sedona Web site, www.scottsdale-sedona.com, is being created to promote day-trip and overnight itineraries between the two communities. The Web site will launch in September.
- A Scottsdale-Sedona brochure will be created and disseminated to leisure visitors, media, tour operators, travel agents and meeting and incentive planners.

- Familiarization tours will allow selected media and tour operators to experience both destinations.
- Consumer promotions will be implemented, including a contest encouraging potential visitors to enter to win an expenses-paid trip to Scottsdale and Sedona. (Press release, 7/27)

A Room of Her Own

Catering to the growing number of women business travelers, hotels are customizing their services to make them feel at home and secure. At Don Shula's Hotel & Golf Club in Miami Lakes, for example, the hotel has introduced the Patrician Floor, a group of 18 rooms set aside exclusively for women business travelers. The new floor is designed to make women feel secure away from home and offers them added perks, pampering and customization that cater not only to their individual needs but also to their whims. The idea for the Patrician Floor was a response to the increase in women business travelers. "Forty percent of today's business travelers are women," said Barbara Cambria, Shula's vice president of marketing. "Since the floor was inaugurated, it has run at 95 percent occupancy." Wyndham, AmeriSuites, Hyatt Regency and Marriott are among chains that offer special services for women guests. But some luxury hotels don't differentiate service for men and woman. (Page 4, Miami Herald Business Monday)

Fort McDowell Wins Romero Award For Casino Excellence

Fort McDowell Casino has won a Romero Award for production of a weekly entertainment calendar highlighting events at the casino. The program aired on ABC 15 news and the Sonoran Living program throughout 2006. The concept for the program was created by Tom McGill Director of Marketing at Fort McDowell Casino. Spokesperson Andi Barness and Amy Walker of ABC 15 production team work with The Fort McDowell Casino marketing team and producer Eileen Luisi to record the segment monthly for consecutive weekly airings. The Best Bet airs within each news cast on KNXV TV 15 each Thursday. The Romero Awards recognize excellence in casino marketing and are named after casino marketing pioneer and author John Romero. The awards honor gaming operators who best fulfill the spirit of Romero's 45 year crusade for effective, measurable and accountable casino marketing expenditures. Fort McDowell Casino and ABC 15 have had a strong relationship with Best Bet for more that a year and the promotion has become a well known segment on ABC 15. (Press Release, 7/31)

Fall Travel A Rapidly Growing Trend

For a growing number of Americans, vacation season no longer ends with Labor Day says USA Today. Consultant Sabre Airline Solutions says advance airline bookings for the September-November period are up an average 5 percent from this time a year ago. Many in the industry say the increase may reflect more than the effect of a growing U.S. economy. Travel agents across the USA are seeing more Americans building travel plans around the advantages of autumn, mainly smaller crowds and better bargains. "Boomers, singles, even honeymooners are changing their dates (from summer) because of the better

fares, better values, better hotels and more choices for their money," says Linda Criswell, a manager for Dillard's Travel, which has 60 offices. At travel agency AAA, with 1,000 locations, airline bookings for September-November travel are up 23 percent this year over last year, spokesman Michael Pina says. Tour bookings are up 14 percent, he says. Terry McCabe, an executive with Manhattan-based agency Altour, with 19 offices, says clients got used to fall discounts after the 9/11 attacks, when carriers tried to woo Americans back into the air, she says. Virgin Atlantic's peak period for flights to London "has stretched out" over the last decade from the first week of September through the Thanksgiving holiday, says Bill King, who heads Virgin's North American operations. Advance bookings for economy-class tickets in the September-November period are up 10 percent from last year, he says. (Marketing & Tourism Trends, 8/1)

Signs of a Slowdown in Las Vegas

Rising prices, burdensome fuel costs, flagging consumer spending are among the gathering storm clouds that could bring slower growth to Las Vegas for the rest of the year, says Business Week. Making matters worse, convention attendance is down 5 percent this year because of higher airfares and hotel rates, thinning the ranks of affluent diners in the city's high-end restaurants. With its heavy dependence on housing and consumers, Las Vegas may provide some hints of what a national slowdown might look like, says the magazine. (Page 32, Business Week, 8/7)

Last Minute Travelers are \$10 Billion Business

Last minute summer travelers are offering marketers a juicy bone of \$10 billion in business, says Compete Inc.'s new travel study. A study by Compete Travel Practice found that although one third of internet travel researchers plan more travel this summer, they have not yet made their specific plans. The study found that travel is the single largest e-commerce industry with more than 50 million consumers planning and researching travel online each month. This year, over \$70 billion in online travel purchases are expected, according to Compete. For its study, Compete analyzed consumer behavior from its panel of two million consumers. Key findings included:

- Two thirds of consumers prefer researching travel options online, surpassing the importance of recommendations from friends and family.
- Among consumers with summer travel planning still to be purchased, nearly 75 percent said they will reserve most or all of their travel online.
- More than two thirds of bookings are coming from what Compete calls "procrastinating and undecided travelers." They make up almost half of the in-market summer travelers who wait to book largely because of indecision about where and when to travel.

Another study by the Travel Industry Association found that 74 percent of leisure travelers plan at least one of their getaways within two weeks of taking the trip; another 26 percent plan all vacations are the last minute. (www.travelmole.com)

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